

WHAT IS CLAIMED

1. For use with signal processing equipment having a motherboard that contains a main processing unit, said main processing unit being adapted to communicate with a daughtercard inserted into a receptacle therefor, said daughtercard containing auxiliary hardware adapted to be interfaced via associated input/output utility device ports to signal source/termination utility devices external to said signal processing equipment, a method of controlling the operation of said signal processing equipment comprising the steps of:

(a) providing said motherboard with a default operation control mechanism, which defines a first software and hardware functionality for said signal processing equipment and is executed by said motherboard in the absence of a daughtercard being coupled with said receptacle;

(b) providing said daughtercard with a replacement operation control mechanism, which defines a second software and hardware functionality for said signal processing equipment, different from said first hardware functionality, and which is to be executed by said motherboard in place of said default operation control mechanism; and

(c) causing said motherboard to execute said default operation control mechanism on said motherboard and thereby cause said signal processing equipment to acquire said first software and hardware functionality,

in the absence of a daughtercard being coupled with said receptacle, but causing said motherboard to execute said replacement operation control mechanism on said daughtercard rather than said default operation control mechanism on said motherboard, and thereby cause said signal processing equipment to acquire said second software and hardware functionality, in response to said daughtercard being coupled with said receptacle.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said signal processing equipment comprises a test apparatus for telecommunication equipment.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein said daughtercard contains a telecommunication transceiver by way of which said motherboard communicates with telecommunication equipment under test by said test apparatus.

4. A signal processing apparatus comprising:

a motherboard containing a main processing unit that is adapted to communicate with a daughtercard inserted into a receptacle therefor, and memory storing default application firmware which is executable by said main processing unit, and defines a first software and hardware functionality for said signal processing apparatus; and

a daughtercard containing auxiliary hardware adapted to be interfaced via associated input/output

utility device ports to signal source/termination utility devices external to said signal processing apparatus, and memory storing replacement application firmware, which is executable by said main processing unit, and defines a second software and hardware functionality for said signal processing apparatus, different from said first hardware functionality; and wherein

said motherboard is operative to execute said default operation control mechanism on said motherboard and thereby cause said signal processing apparatus to acquire said first software and hardware functionality, in the absence of a daughtercard being coupled with said receptacle, and is operative to execute said replacement operation control mechanism on said daughtercard rather than said default operation control mechanism on said motherboard, and thereby cause said signal processing apparatus to acquire said second software and hardware functionality, in response to said daughtercard being coupled with said receptacle.

5. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said signal processing apparatus comprises a test device for telecommunication equipment.

6. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said daughtercard contains a telecommunication transceiver by way of which said motherboard

communicates with telecommunication equipment under test
by said test device.